

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 235

EC 202 084

TITLE Deafness and Interpreting.  
INSTITUTION New Jersey State Dept. of Labor, Trenton. Div. of the Deaf.  
PUB DATE Oct 87  
NOTE 32p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Accessibility (for Disabled); \*American Sign Language; Certification; Codes of Ethics; \*Communication (Thought Transfer); \*Deaf Interpreting; \*Deafness; \*Hearing Impairments; Interpreters; Interpretive Skills; Lipreading; Nonverbal Communication; \*Sign Language

IDENTIFIERS New Jersey; Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Inc

## ABSTRACT

This paper explains how the hearing loss of deaf persons affects communication, describes methods deaf individuals use to communicate, and addresses the role of interpreters in the communication process. The volume covers: communication methods such as speechreading or lipreading, written notes, gestures, or sign language (American Sign Language, Pidgin Sign English, and Manually Coded English); the wide usage of American Sign Language within the deaf community and its increasing acceptance by colleges and universities as a fulfillment of foreign language requirements; the history of interpreting; a rationale for the use of interpreters as the most efficient and effective method of facilitating communication between hearing and deaf persons; steps towards becoming an interpreter; types of interpreting; work settings in which interpreters are needed; the certification process and types of certificates; procedures for securing an interpreter through the Interpreter Referral Service of the New Jersey Division of the Deaf; guidelines for using the interpreter effectively and comfortably; and suggestions to maximize communication between deaf and hearing people when an interpreter is not available. Appendices contain the code of ethics of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and a directory of New Jersey resources available for additional information on interpreting. (JDD)

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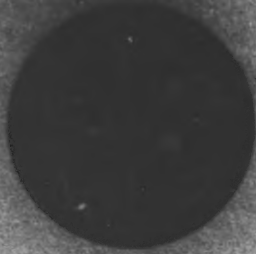
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# DEAFNESS AND INTERPRETING



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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contents of this booklet were reviewed and commented on favorably by the New Jersey Association of the Deaf and the New Jersey Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Special thanks is extended to Gay Belliveau, Administrative Assistant/Sign Language Interpreter, for offering invaluable comments and suggestions during the preparation of this booklet.

Special appreciation is given to Catherine Grehlinger, Coordinator of the Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service for preparing this booklet.

Division of the Deaf  
Richard Herring, Director

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## INTRODUCTION

This publication deals with deaf persons and how their hearing loss affects communication. The various methods deaf individuals use to communicate and the special role interpreters play in the communication process will be addressed. Interpreters are trained professionals who enable communication to occur between persons who do not share a common communication mode.

Before reading further, consider this: suppose you were traveling in a non-English speaking country and were arrested, involved in an accident, or became seriously ill. Assuming you could not speak the language, who would you rather have assisting you with communication -- someone who has taken a basic English course in school, or a professionally trained interpreter? Keep this scenario in mind as you read this publication. Do not be surprised if you change some of your perceptions or you receive additional insight into the area of communication in general, and hearing loss in particular.

## THE IMPACT OF DEAFNESS

Communication is vital to our social, intellectual, and vocational well-being. How many times during the course of a day do we rely on the telephone, radio, television and the spoken word to give and receive information? How about music? What impact does the simple enjoyment of music have on our lives? Do we ever stop to consider the ramifications of suddenly being unable to hear or speak? Yet an estimated 22 million Americans suffer from communication disorders -- problems with hearing, speech, or language. This makes communication disorders our nation's number one handicapping disability (affecting more people than heart disease, paralysis, epilepsy, blindness, tuberculosis, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and multiple sclerosis combined!). Fully 10% of our local citizens are affected by hearing and speech problems (Sherril, p.1).

Even though hearing problems are the most prevalent disabling condition, the public at large remains generally uninformed on this issue primarily because deafness is an invisible handicap - a victim of "out of sight, out of mind." The absence of sound produces a variety of communication difficulties depending upon when the loss occurred and the degree of the loss. Persons having hearing and speech impairments range from newborns or small children who became deaf before learning language, to youth and adults who suddenly lose their hearing due to an illness or accident, to elderly persons whose hearing deteriorates as a result of the aging process. Although the "bottom line" is similar, in that all are unable to hear or hear well enough to communicate through normal channels, each is affected differently and experiences unique problems and frustrations.

Most people view deafness as just the inability to hear; however, it is a much more complex issue. There are five separate handicaps which can accompany a hearing loss.

1. Acquisition of Language - An individual who is deprived of the normal means of acquiring and transmitting language must develop an alternate method to express his thoughts.
2. Communication - The major communication difficulty for pre-lingually (those who became deaf before language is acquired) deaf people is not having a language frame of reference when they are learning to speak, write, or speechread.

In addition, communication loss are exacerbated by not enjoying the comfort of a natural conversation, not hearing a radio announcement, not understanding a news or entertainment program on TV, not catching a conversational tidbit through eavesdropping, not sharing the latest joke. All of this affects a deaf person's sophistication about his world and can result in personal, social, educational, and vocational obstacles.

3. **Misconcepts and Misinformation** - Most people with normal hearing have had little, if any, experience with deaf people. As a result, there are many preconceived ideas about deafness which are not necessarily true. There is a false assumption that language and communication are the same. There is a tendency to equate either or both with intelligence. Speech cannot be equated with either communication or language. While all three are related, they are separate entities. It is often thought that deaf people can speechread (lipread) as effectively as persons can hear. However, speechreading is a skill at which only some deaf persons become proficient; others simply cannot master the feat of speechreading. While good speechreading skills can help in communication, only 26 percent of all speech is visible on the lips, and even the best speechreaders cannot speechread everything that is said. Another common misconception is that deaf persons are a safety risk because they are unable to hear warning noises. The fact is that deaf workers (and drivers) have above average safety records. In several studies, deaf people have demonstrated that they are usually more visually alert to hazards in their environment than hearing persons because deaf people do not rely on sounds to warn them of danger as do hearing persons (Sherrill, p.2).
4. **Invisibility** - As previously noted, there is no outward indication of deafness; therefore, one is generally unaware that the condition exists. A good example of the disservice to deaf people occurs when speaking to a stranger who fails to respond. Hearing people almost never think "perhaps he didn't hear me," but, "he's rude."
5. **Inability to Hear** - The least crippling problem. Most people can visualize what that entails; i.e., sound going off the television or being in an area where the noise is so great it prevents hearing speech. Compared with the other problems which can accompany a hearing loss, the hearing loss itself is a simpler matter with which to deal.

## HOW A DEAF PERSON COMMUNICATES

Each deaf person is an individual. The intelligence, personality, family, environment, age at onset of deafness, degree and type of deafness, language background, residual hearing (the degree, if any, of hearing of the person), listening skills, speechreading and speech abilities, and educational history are unique to each deaf person.

Consequently, deaf people communicate in a variety of ways. Some use speech only, while others use a combination of sign language, fingerspelling, and speech. Some write and some use body language and facial expression to supplement their interactions. One aspect that is common, yet unique, to deaf people is that they all, to some degree, communicate visually. No matter what the situation, deaf people usually employ a variety of ways to convey ideas to another person, and they are often more than willing to respond when addressed.

For hearing persons, the most important thing is to determine which combination of communication techniques works best with a particular deaf person. Experimenting with different communication techniques allows the parties involved to determine which is the most efficient and comfortable way to facilitate communication. The modes through which ideas or feelings are exchanged is not a critical issue, but it is vital that communication occur.

The following is a brief explanation of some of the techniques that may be employed by deaf people to facilitate communication:

Speechreading or Lipreading - A deaf person may or may not be able to speech-read. Under normal conditions deaf people generally comprehend only 26 percent of what is said by speechreading (some times referred to as "lipreading"). Given two equally intelligent people with identical training, one may be an excellent speechreader, the other poor. A deaf person who prefers speechreading as his chosen mode of communication may require an oral interpreter. Oral interpreters are professionals who have been specifically trained to present information through mouth movements only.

Oral interpreters do not use sign language, instead they use clear mouth movements and rephrase words which are difficult to speechread. For example, the words green and red sound different, but they appear identical on the lips. If the words red and green appeared in the same sentence or paragraph, an oral interpreter might replace the word red with maroon, mauve, dark pink, or another synonym for red. It is probable that a skilled speechreader will get along fine speechreading you; however, if communication is not proceeding, an oral interpreter could help considerably.

Notes - Written communication can be a time-consuming process. In addition, because English may be a second language for many deaf persons, some deaf persons have limited competence in writing English. Their writing style may be similar to others for whom English is a second language. When writing, try using concrete images and simple sentence structures. Nonetheless, a deaf person will usually want important information, such as appointment dates and times, confirmed in writing.

Gestures - Some deaf persons have no formalized communication system. They may express themselves in a variety of ways, such as gestures, pictures, pantomime, or by pointing to objects. Some deaf persons may have developed "home signs" to communicate with family members. These "signs" are generally understood only by the family members with whom the deaf person regularly interacts. When a deaf person uses "home signs," a family member may be able to facilitate communication. Also, a qualified interpreter may prove helpful. Sometimes language is so limited, both a qualified interpreter and a family member will be needed to facilitate communication.

Sign Language - This is the method of communication used by most moderately or profoundly deaf persons. Sign language is the use of manually produced signs and fingerspelling to convey information and ideas. Sign language is not just a manual representation of oral language; it is an independent language. When combined with facial expressions and gestures, sign language conveys rich meaning, humor, pathos, and many other subtleties of communication. Most of the time a sign language interpreter will be necessary to facilitate communication, since two languages are involved (English and Sign Language).

Below are some of the terms used to identify the major categories of sign language:

American Sign Language (ASL) - American Sign Language is also referred to as ASL, and sometimes Ameslan. American Sign Language is a visual/gestural language with vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and syntax different from English. ASL is the language of the Deaf Community, a cultural group of people who share common values, attitudes, and experiences, as well as a common language.

Pidgin Sign English (PSE) - Pidgin Sign English is a combination of two languages, English and ASL. Although not a true language, PSE developed naturally out of a desire for deaf and hearing people to communicate with each other. Because it is neither ASL or English, PSE can reflect different forms. Sometimes it more closely resembles ASL, and other times it appears more like English. In general, PSE uses ASL signs in an English word order.

Manually Coded English (MCE) - Manually Coded English is also referred to as MCE or Manual English. Several different systems have been developed to provide visual representation of English to improve academic achievement. MCE systems are typically used in educational settings with children rather than in social interactions among deaf adults. ASL is often the preference of deaf adults.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AND ITS ROLE  
IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual-gestural language created by deaf persons and used by approximately 250,000 - 500,000 deaf Americans of all ages. The units of ASL are composed of shapes and movements of the hands, arms, eyes, and head. Body posture is also important. These shapes and movements serve as the "words" and "intonation" of the language. American Sign Language contains distinct syntax, grammar, idioms, and even dialects. According to Lou Fant, author of many works on ASL, (Grehlinger, 1984) American Sign Language is recognized as

"a legitimate language in and of itself.  
That is to say, it is not based upon English,  
but stands by itself, on its own two feet.  
If English did not exist, ... [ASL] could  
still exist, just as French or Spanish exist  
independently of English." (p. 62)

Until recently, most deaf people attended special schools for deaf children. Most of these are residential schools where deaf students eat, study, sleep, and play together -- apart from hearing students their age. Throughout their school and adult years, deaf people come together for numerous sporting events, school reunions and other events for the deaf community, including regional tournaments and special olympics. Parties with captioned films, special tours and newsletters present other opportunities for deaf people to socialize with one another. Another aspect which continues to strengthen the bonds of the deaf community is the fact that at least 85 90% of deaf adults marry within the deaf community. A result of this continuous contact in academic, social, and job-related situations is a cohesive and tight-knit community with its own unique language that is carefully preserved and nurtured by the community.

Approximately 90% of deaf people have hearing parents (Sherrill, p.3). Since their parents use a language (usually spoken English) that their deaf child can neither hear nor use with any facility, meaningful communication with family members is often limited.

It is at school, with one's peers, that most personal and social information-sharing occurs and where close relationships are established. This communication occurs through the use of a language specially designed for the eyes rather than the ears, and it is passed on by deaf employees at residential schools and by deaf parents whose children then teach other deaf children how to use the language.

American Sign Language is used among peers within the deaf community. With very few exceptions, ASL is not used in the area of education which tends to be dominated by hearing people, most of whom do not know ASL. In fact, most educators have traditionally had very negative attitudes toward ASL, partly because they did not recognize it as a rich and separate language. Consequently, educators have tried to discourage its use among deaf students.

However, now regarded as a true language, the use of American Sign Language is becoming more widespread. Several universities and colleges are accepting ASL as a fulfillment of foreign language requirements. Some universities currently following this practice include: Harvard, Brown, Georgetown, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Also, in Maine and Texas the legislatures have passed resolutions recognizing sign language as a foreign language.

## HISTORY OF INTERPRETING

Interpreting for deaf persons has occurred since 1815 when the language of signs was formally initiated into the United States educational system at the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. Since "interpreting" was not formally recognized during that time, the activity taking place was merely referred to as "signing." During these early years, "signers" or "helpers" as they became known, were very paternalistic to deaf persons for whom they interpreted. This paternalism was a result of the close family or religious ties between the "signers/helpers" and deaf persons. Also reflecting the societal attitudes of the time was the general belief that hearing impaired persons could not take care of their own personal, social, or business needs without assistance.

In the early 1960's an increased number of deaf individuals began to request the services of interpreters. Attitudes of professionals working with deaf people began to change as some deaf individuals were promoted into better jobs. Vocational rehabilitation services were made available to some deaf persons during this time. Deaf persons began to organize into state associations in order to promote their causes.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1965 (Public Law 89-333) authorized interpreting as a case service expenditure for deaf clients in the vocational rehabilitation environment. This was the first formal recognition of interpreting services. Since that time, the role of interpreting services in the educational, career, and social aspects of deaf persons' lives has continued to expand.

In 1973 Congress passed a law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental handicap in every federally assisted program or activity in the country. That law is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This civil rights legislation for handicapped persons states:

No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States ... shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Deaf citizens are seldom prohibited from accessing services because of physical barriers. However, they are frequently denied access because of a service provider's limited ability to communicate with deaf consumers. Therefore, if an agency or organization is receiving federal funds, that agency or organization is required by law to provide and pay for interpreter services.

The right to communicate should not be limited to deaf persons using agencies receiving federal funds. Deaf individuals should be able to conduct their business in as efficient a manner as possible. Interpreters should be available to enable deaf persons to communicate with bank and insurance personnel, physicians, lawyers, and other private businesses. By keeping services inaccessible to deaf people, a significant number of potential consumers are being alienated. Whatever the service being provided, it makes good business sense to make the service accessible to deaf persons. To do that interpreters should be provided whenever possible.

### WHY ARE INTERPRETERS NECESSARY?

Deafness is a communication handicap. It has prevented the access of many deaf people to programs and services offered to society in general. The ability to communicate is a basic necessity in American society. Deafness precludes a vital communication tool by eliminating auditory input from the environment. The deaf person - whose hearing is so seriously impaired that he cannot understand speech even with a hearing aid - is effectively put at a distance, or isolated from the world of sound. As a result, the deaf person often has neither the knowledge of existing services nor the ability to communicate his needs to obtain them. To date, very few organizations have personnel who can communicate with the deaf person much less interpret for the deaf person.

Communication is vital in all aspects of life. Clear, accurate, and effective communication is desirable in every situation, but it is especially necessary in educational, medical, legal, and business settings. For persons with a hearing loss that prevents them from understanding speech, auxillary aids are needed. By an increasing degree in the last 20 years, interpreters have become the most efficient and effective method of facilitating communication between hearing and deaf persons.

Perhaps the biggest misconception concerning interpreting for deaf people is the general public's false assumption that a basic course in sign language or the ability to fingerspell is sufficient criteria to qualify one to serve as an interpreter. This misconception has resulted in a tremendous disservice to both deaf consumers and the interpreting profession. Hearing people usually underestimate the complexity of sign language. They may be inclined to use any person as an interpreter who has demonstrated even the slightest knowledge of signs or fingerspelling. Well-meaning as their intentions may be, sign language students, educators of deaf children, or relatives of deaf people usually are not qualified as interpreters.

The ability to interpret is a skill separate from signing and -- as is the case with learning to interpret foreign languages -- requires years of training and experience in order to achieve proficiency.

It follows, then, that even a person who knows enough sign language to converse with a deaf person will not possess the necessary skill and expertise to accurately function in the role of an interpreter.

The job of an interpreter is to convey accurately, all messages between deaf and hearing individuals. With a qualified interpreter, an interview or conversation can proceed at a fairly normal pace. Interpretation can often be rendered simultaneously both into and out of sign language or mouthed English. However, as with interpreting between two languages, literal interpretations are often impossible, so there may be times when the process is slowed down somewhat in order to be communicated between sign language and English.

## WHAT IS AN INTERPRETER?

A sign language interpreter is a person who facilitates communication between deaf and hearing individuals. An interpreter has acquired sign language skills, has studied techniques and ethics, and has gained knowledge required to function in a professional capacity.

The first step towards becoming an interpreter is acquiring fluency in sign language. This requires formal instruction in American Sign Language as well as contact with deaf people who use sign language regularly. A person cannot acquire fluency by attending formal classes only. As with any foreign language, interaction with the community and use of the language in real life situations is a prerequisite to gaining the competence necessary to enter the field of interpretation. The same is true for sign language interpreters; the best experience is exposure to real life situations within the deaf community.

### Types of Interpreting

Just as not all deaf persons are adept at speechreading, not all deaf people know sign language. Deaf persons who have been educated in public schools without specialized services, who have been educated in oral schools for the deaf, or who have lost their hearing during their adult years and have not been exposed to sign language, would not necessarily benefit from a sign language interpreter, yet may still require communication assistance.

Sign Language interpreting is the converting of spoken messages into signs and/or the conversion of signs into spoken messages. As mentioned previously, there are several distinct sign systems. A qualified interpreter will determine whether the deaf client is most comfortable with American Sign Language (ASL) or one of the Signed English systems. An interpreter who converts spoken English into ASL and signed ASL into spoken English is, in the jargon of the profession, "interpreting." An interpreter who converts spoken English into one of the Signed English systems and vice versa, is "transliterating."

Oral Interpreting combines both speechreading and spoken language. Some deaf people prefer this approach over sign language. The interpreter presents spoken messages by using clear mouth movements which can be easily speechread. If necessary, the interpreter can also repeat orally the spoken messages of a deaf person.

Qualified certified interpreters are always in demand. They are needed in educational, medical, legal, social, mental health, religious, financial, employment, personal, and other settings. The need for interpreters is increasing with the enactment of laws regarding accessibility. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law which requires that interpreter services be provided by any agency or organization receiving federal funding. There is also a New Jersey Law, Assembly, No. 1884 - L. 1983, c. 564, which directs that the court appoint a certified interpreter for any deaf person who is a witness or party as a complaintent, defendant, or as hearing impaired parents of a juvenile throughout all proceedings before any New Jersey court, including Municipal Courts. As laws such as these are enacted, deaf and hearing people are becoming more aware of and sensitive to the rights of deaf people. Additionally, service providers and professionals find that the professional interpreter's services work to the advantage of both the service provider and the deaf person, especially in terms of efficiency. The use of an interpreter can usually save a good deal of time.

#### Certification

Most professional interpreters begin their entry into the field by completing an interpreter training program. At this stage, the interpreter trainee may have a "certificate of completion," but the trainee will not yet be a "certified" interpreter. The standards for attaining certification are high. Students usually need extensive field experience before they are able to pass the evaluation and become "certified."

Certification is awarded by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID), the professional organization and certifying body of sign language and oral interpreters in the United States.

Various types of certification are awarded to interpreters based on an evaluation of the candidate's interpretation skills, knowledge of the RID Code of Ethics (guidelines for professional behavior). The types of certification currently awarded by RID will be discussed in depth later.

The goal of the interpreter is to make the communication exchange as equal as possible for both the hearing and the deaf participants. To accomplish this, the interpreter must convey as accurately as possible the intent of the speaker's message whether in spoken English or American Sign Language (or other types of signed communication). The interpreter strives to convey the speaker's thoughts, feelings and attitudes, as well as his words. Thus, the interpreter must be bilingual, skilled in both English (oral and written) and American Sign Language (manual). In addition, the interpreter must be able to change the mode or system of communication to fit the needs and desires of the individuals concerned, meaning the interpreter may use Manually Coded English (MCE). The interpreter must function impartially and, at all times, strive only to relay information, not initiate or change it.

The RID certification system for sign language, oral, and legal interpreters represents a minimum level of achievement in a particular area. These minimum levels represent a starting point for interpreters and vary according to the certification area and level of competence. Once certified interpreters should and do continue to improve their skills by attending workshops and training seminars and through frequent use of sign language. The following is a brief description of the current certifications awarded by RID:

- COMPREHENSIVE SKILLS CERTIFICATE (CSC) This individual has demonstrated the ability to both expressively (voice to sign) and receptively (sign to voice) interpret and transliterate, and is able to communicate with deaf persons using either American Sign Language or a manual code for English.
- INTERPRETATION CERTIFICATE (IC) This individual has demonstrated the ability to expressively interpret in American Sign Language and at a lower level of competence than the CSC, receptively interpret American Sign Language to voice.
- TRANSLITERATION CERTIFICATE (TC) This individual has demonstrated the ability to expressively transliterate in a manual code for English and, at a lower level of competence than the CSC, receptively transliterate a manual code for English to voice.

- REVERSE SKILLS CERTIFICATE (RSC) This individual has demonstrated the ability to convey a message from American Sign Language or Manually Coded English into appropriate English, either signed or spoken. This certificate is only awarded to hearing impaired persons.
- SPECIALIST CERTIFICATE: LEGAL (SC:L) This certificate is issued only to CSC holders of at least four years who have additionally demonstrated specialized skills in interpreting in legal settings. There is a special evaluation established for this certification.
- ORAL INTERPRETER CERTIFICATE: COMPREHENSIVE (OIC:C) This individual has demonstrated the highest comprehensive level of interpreting in oral situations. This interpreter is skilled in both paraphrasing and transliterating a spoken message with or without voice and is able to present verbally or rephrase the words and/or message of an oral hearing impaired person who may or may not use understandable speech.
- ORAL INTERPRETER CERTIFICATE: SPOKEN TO VISIBLE (OIC:S/V) This individual has demonstrated the ability to expressively interpret, paraphrase, or transliterate a spoken message with or without voice and, at a lower level of competence than the OIC:C, verbally present or rephrase the words and/or message of an oral hearing impaired person.
- ORAL INTERPRETER CERTIFICATE: VISIBLE TO SPOKEN (OIC:V/S) This individual has demonstrated the ability to understand the speech and/or mouth movements of oral hearing impaired persons and verbally present or rephrase their words and/or message. This certificate is usually awarded to a hearing impaired interpreter, however, a hearing person may also receive it.

In addition to nationally certified interpreters, the New Jersey Division of the Deaf utilizes the services of state screened interpreters. The Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service offers a screening for interpreters who have recently graduated from interpreter training programs or who wish to become listed with the Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service. All interpreters who work through the Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service if they do not possess valid certification from the National RID must be screened. The screening helps to insure the quality of services rendered by interpreters through the Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service.

## HOW TO GET AN INTERPRETER

The New Jersey Division of the Deaf operates an Interpreter Referral Service. The Interpreter Referral Service should be contacted any time that an interpreter is needed. A sign language interpreter will be scheduled by the Interpreter Referral Service for the date and time requested.

In order to make the process of securing an interpreter run smoothly and efficiently, it is important to have all of the information about the assignment when the request is placed with the Interpreter Referral Service. Necessary information for each request includes: the name, address, and phone number of the person making the request; date and time of the assignment; the exact location of the assignment; the name of the client; the name and address of the person responsible for payment for the interpreter; and the type of assignment for which the interpreter is needed. All of this information is essential in order to secure the services of an interpreter most qualified for the assignment.

The Interpreter Referral Service handles requests for interpreters on a statewide basis. A list of interpreters and their addresses is maintained by the Interpreter Referral Service. When a request is received by the Interpreter Referral Service, qualified interpreters are contacted to determine their availability for the assignment. When an interpreter accepts an assignment, they are then provided with all the information pertinent to the job. The person who made the request is also contacted in order to confirm that an interpreter will be present at the scheduled time.

The number of interpreters and their availability is limited. Therefore, the Interpreter Referral Service asks that requests for interpreters be made at least two weeks in advance of the assignment date if possible. This will enable the Interpreter Referral Service to effectively secure the most qualified interpreter for the job.

Monthly and yearly reports have shown that the procedure previously discussed is the most effective way to serve all parties requiring the services of a sign language interpreter. When the service of an interpreter is needed, contact the New Jersey Division of the Deaf Interpreter Referral Service. The telephone number is (609) 984-7283 and is both voice and TDD accessible.

## HOW TO USE AN INTERPRETER

Interpreters certified by RID must adhere to the Code of Ethics established by the organization. This is one of the advantages of using a certified interpreter. It is appropriate to demand strict adherence to the Code and to remove any interpreter who violates the Code. Similarly, requests or demands made by parties in any given communication exchange which if followed would require an interpreter to violate the Code, should be refused by the qualified interpreter. It is important that all parties involved in the interpreting process be familiar with the Code of Ethics. (See Appendix A).

During communication, the interpreter will convey all messages from both the hearing person and the deaf person. The interpreter will sign what is said by the hearing person and will say in spoken English what is signed by the deaf person. The visual nature of sign language makes good lighting and placement of the interpreter important.

The following suggestions should assist you in feeling comfortable when using an interpreter:

1. Remember that hearing loss does not affect intelligence. Research has shown that when intelligence is measured by performance rather than verbal tests, the pattern of deaf people's scores is identical to the pattern of hearing people's scores. Also, deaf people have many of the same feelings and needs as hearing people. Interpreters are trained to bridge the gap between different languages regardless of the education or sophistication of the communicators.
2. Avoid locating the interpreter in front of a bright light or window. Glare and shadows make lip movements and sign language difficult to follow.
3. Speak directly to the deaf person; speaking through the interpreter not to the interpreter. For example, avoid phrases like "tell him" or "ask her," as these indicate that the speaker regards the deaf person as a third party rather than one of the participants involved in the conversation.
4. Do not involve the interpreter in a private conversation while he is on duty.

5. Speak at a normal rate of speed and use a natural tone of voice.  
The interpreter should be able to follow conversation at a normal pace or be no more than a few words behind, depending on the communication context and the individual involved.
6. Maintain everyday speech patterns. It is very obvious if one uses only monosyllabic words.
7. The interpreter should be seated next to and slightly behind the speaker. This allows the deaf person to see both the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously.
8. In a situation where the interpreter is speaking what the deaf person is signing, remember that the words are not thoughts of the interpreter, but of the person he is interpreting for, and any response should be made accordingly.
9. Because of the visual nature of sign language, expect the deaf person to be looking at the interpreter most of the time; not at you.

Sometimes communication must take place between a hearing and a deaf person without the benefit of an interpreter. If a situation arises in which you need to convey a message to a deaf individual, the following information and list of communication tips may prove helpful to you.

Because deaf people cannot hear their own voices, their speech may sound different. Being unable to hear, a deaf person has unique problems learning English. He learned language primarily through reading, sign language, or speechreading, and has not had the luxury of listening to radio, television, or other people's conversations. Below are some suggestions which will help maximize communication between deaf and hearing people:

1. Try to sit near and face the deaf individual.
2. Maintain eye contact with the deaf person when speaking.
3. Minimize factors that will interfere with your client's ability to see your face, such as strong sunlight.
4. When speaking, do not cover your mouth. Avoid chewing gum or smoking which interfere with speechreading.

5. Speak at a normal pace. Remember, a deaf person cannot hear, so shouting will not help.
6. Speak as clearly as possible without exaggerating. If your client does not seem to understand a sentence, try rewording it, not just repeating it. Remember, some words are easier to speechread than others.
7. Use gestures, point to objects or do anything you feel will facilitate the communication process. Remember, your client relies on visual communication.
8. Put important information, such as appointment times, in writing.
9. Remind your agency head that access to services for deaf people not only means providing interpreters, but also providing a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD). TDDs allow deaf people to contact your agency through existing telephone lines by typing the conversation on a small machine similar to a typewriter.

## CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this publication will increase awareness about deafness and how professional interpreters mitigate communication barriers. For additional information concerning any aspect of deafness and the communication process, interpreter training programs, government services, and securing the services of a professional interpreter, please refer to Appendix B located at the end of this booklet.

Additional copies of this publication are available free of charge from the New Jersey Division of the Deaf. Contact the Division of the Deaf by mail at: New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of the Deaf, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0058, or by phone (609) 984-7283, V/TDD, or (800) 792-8339 V/TDD.

#### NOTES

(1) No sexist slur is intended by the use of male pronouns throughout this paper. Male pronouns were used so as not to disrupt the natural flow of language.

(2) The use of the term deaf in this paper encompasses the terms hard of hearing as well as hearing impaired. Again the term deaf was employed in order to aid in a smooth flow of language.

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## APPENDIX A

### REGISTRY OF INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF CODE OF ETHICS

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Inc. has set forth the following principles of ethical behavior to protect and guide the interpreter/transliterators, the consumers (hearing and hearing impaired), and the profession, as well as to insure for all the right to communicate.

This Code of Ethics applies to all members of the RID and all certified non-members.

While these are general guidelines to govern the performance of the interpreter/transliterators generally, it is recognized that there are ever increasing numbers of highly specialized situations that demand specific explanation. It is envisioned that the RID will issue appropriate guidelines for all of these situations.

1. Interpreters/transliterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.

#### Guidelines:

Interpreters/transliterators shall not reveal information about any assignment.

Even seemingly unimportant information could be damaging in the wrong hands. Therefore, to avoid this possibility, interpreters/transliterators must not say anything about an assignment. In cases where meetings or information becomes a matter of public record, interpreters/transliterators shall use discretion in discussing such meetings or information.

If a problem arises between the interpreter/transliterators and any person involved in an assignment, the interpreter/transliterators should first discuss it with the person involved. If no solution can be reached, then both should agree on a third person who could advise them.

When instructing interpreter trainees by the method of sharing actual experiences, the trainers shall not reveal any of the following information: (a) names, sex, age, etc. of the consumer; (b) day of the week, time of the day, time of the year the situation took place; (c) location, including city, state or agency; (d) other persons involved; and (e) unnecessary specifics about the situation.

It requires only a minimum amount of information to identify the parties involved.

2. Interpreters/transliterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker, using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.

**Guidelines:**

Interpreters/translitterators are not editors and must transmit everything that is said in exactly the way it was intended. This is especially difficult when the interpreter disagrees with what is being said or feels uncomfortable with "how" something is stated. Interpreters/translitterators must remember that they are not responsible for what is said, only for conveying it accurately. If the interpreter's/translitterator's own feelings interfere with rendering the message accurately, she or he shall withdraw from the situation.

While working from spoken English to sign or non-audible spoken English, interpreters/translitterators should communicate in the manner most easily understood or preferred by deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers, be it American Sign Language, Manually Coded English, fingerspelling, paraphrasing in non-audible spoken English, gesturing, drawing, or writing, etc. It is important for interpreters/translitterators and deaf/hard-of-hearing persons to spend some time adjusting to each others way of communicating prior to the actual assignment. When working from sign or non-audible spoken English, the interpreter/translitterator shall speak the language used by the hearing person in the spoken form, be it English, Spanish, French, etc.

3. Interpreters/translitterators shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.

**Guidelines:**

Just as interpreters/translitterators may not omit anything which is said, they may not add anything to the situation, even when they are asked to do so by other parties involved.

An interpreter/translitterator is only present in a given situation because two or more people have difficulty communicating, and thus the interpreter's/translitterator's only function is to facilitate communication. She or he shall not become personally involved because in doing so, she or he accepts responsibility for the outcome, which does not rightly belong to the interpreter/translitterator.

4. Interpreters/translitterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.

**Guidelines:**

Interpreters/translitterators shall only accept assignments for which they are qualified. However, when an interpreter/translitterator shortage exists and the only available interpreter/translitterator does not possess the necessary skills for a particular assignment, this situation should be explained to the consumer(s). If the consumer(s) agrees that services are needed regardless of skill levels, then the available interpreters/translitterators should use their best judgement about accepting or rejecting the assignment.

Certain situations may prove uncomfortable for some interpreters/translators and consumers. Religious, political, racial or sexual differences, etc., can adversely affect the facilitating role. Therefore, interpreters/translators shall not accept assignments which they know will involve such situations.

Interpreters/translators shall generally refrain from providing services in situations where family members, or close personal or professional relationships may affect impartiality, since it is difficult to mask inner feelings. Under these circumstances, especially in legal settings, the ability to prove oneself unbiased when challenged is lessened. In emergency situations, it is realized that the interpreter/translator may have to provide services for family members, friends, or close business associates. However, all parties should be informed that the interpreter/translator may not become personally involved in the proceedings.

5. Interpreters/translators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.

**Guidelines:**

Interpreters/translators shall be knowledgeable about fees which are appropriate to the profession, and be informed about the current suggested fee schedule of the national organization. A sliding scale of hourly and daily rates has been established for interpreters/translators in many areas. To determine the appropriate fee, interpreters/translators should know their own level of skill, level of certification, length of experience, nature of the assignment, and the local cost of living index.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for interpreters/translators to provide services without charge. This should be done with discretion, taking care to preserve the self-respect of the consumers. Consumers should not feel that they are recipients of charity. When providing gratis services, care should be taken so that the livelihood of other interpreters/translators will be protected. A freelance interpreter/translator may depend on this work for a living, and therefore must charge for services rendered, while persons with other full-time work may perform the service as a favor without feeling a loss of income.

6. Interpreters/translators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.

**Guidelines:**

Interpreters/translators shall conduct themselves in such a manner that brings respect to themselves, the consumers and the national organization. The term "appropriate manner" refers to: (a) dressing in a manner that is in contrast to skin tone and is not distracting, and (b) conducting oneself in all phases of an assignment in a manner befitting a professional.

7. Interpreters/transliterate shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues and reading of current literature in the field.
8. Interpreters/transliterate, by virtue of membership in or certification by the RID, Inc., shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

APPENDIX B

Resources available for additional information regarding interpreting.

National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.  
One Metro Square  
51 Monroe Street  
Suite 1107  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
(301)279-0555 (V/TDD)

New Jersey Department of Labor  
Division of the Deaf  
Catherine Grehlinger, Coordinator, Interpreter Referral Service  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0058  
(609)984-7283 (V/TDD)

New Jersey Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf  
Mariann Jacobson, President  
58 Harrison Avenue  
Edison, New Jersey 08837  
(201)549-1631 (V/TDD)

New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts  
Gay Belliveau, Administrative Assistant/Sign Language Interpreter  
Hughes Justice Complex  
CN -988  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
(609)633-2150 (V/TDD)

New Jersey Association of the Deaf  
Charlotte Karras, President  
3608 Park Avenue  
Edison, New Jersey 08820  
(201)549-0621 (V/TDD)

Interpreter Training Program  
Eileen Forestal, Coordinator  
Union County College  
1033 Springfield Avenue  
Cranford, New Jersey 07016  
(201)276-5072 (TDD Only)  
(201)276-2600 (Voice)